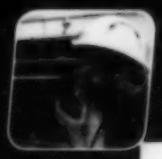
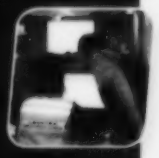
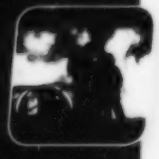
On Scene

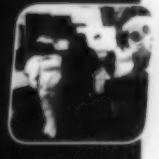
FOR PARTNERS IN FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

VOLUME 30 | #01 | 2009









Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership

Assessing risks together

A PILOT PROJECT underway in the Grande Prairie area may soon have positive impacts for fire departments across Alberta. Aptly titled the *Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership*, it is a six month pilot project focused on analyzing hazards and establishing risk levels around the Grande Prairie region.

The impetus for the project actually got started a year ago when both the City of Grande Prairie and the County of Grande Prairie independently commissioned studies to look at their emergency plans and analyze their emergency preparedness needs. The rapid growth of the City of Grande Prairie combined with the growing petrochemical industry in the area was a concern for both municipal bodies as they recognized the need for increased emergency preparedness for the future. From there the Director of Protective Services for the City of Grande Prairie started discussing the issue and approached the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) to help fund the project.

Knowing that the area needs increased resources, it was a matter of determining how best to do that," said Al Kennedy of Culzean Consulting. "The first step is risk assessment, which is what this pilot project is about. You need to know what the risks are before deciding what steps you'll take."

Working with Kennedy, the working group, comprised of Peter Enson, County Fire Chief; Rick Adair, Chief Fire Prevention Officer for the City of Grande Prairie; James Kostuk, Fire Prevention Officer for the City of Grande Prairie; and Jennifer Woods, Program Coordinator, Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership; established a process to analyze the hazards in the area. Called the Infrastructure Risk Evaluation Model, the process involved gathering consistent information with respect to the following five component areas:

- **physical reality**
- **resources available**
- **participants**
- **policies and practices**
- **activities and experiences**

It also included a specific scoring model, developed by the working group.

The working group then started identifying the hazards by going through and inspecting the area immediately within and around the City of Grande Prairie. "We decided to start first with the city, because it has a significant, and growing, population and there are known risks," said Rick Adair.

After assessing the hazards against the five components, each member of the working group used the scoring model to rank the hazards. While some factors weighed more than others, everyone scored the hazards independently and then compared notes. "Our scores were pretty comparable," noted Adair.

"...the growing petrochemical industry in the area was a concern for both municipal bodies as they recognized the need for increased emergency preparedness for the future.

"We then ranked each of the 43 hazards, and identified them in a report that was presented to a joint meeting of the city and county councils in December 2008."

The pilot project has created an effective partnership between the City of Grande Prairie and the County of Grande Prairie along with the towns of Lowel, Hythe, Sexsmith and Wembley. Determining risk levels in the region will assist the communities to form a key base for deciding how the region will deal with emergency response capabilities.

"Now that the city risk assessment has been completed, our next step is to expand out to the county and go through the same process there," added Adair. "We have a commitment to move forward quickly so this work is getting underway in early 2009."

This is the first issue of *On Scene*. Let us know what you think, write to: aema@gov.ab.ca

*Formerly know as *Alberta FIREnews*

Alberta

Contents

AAEMA staff updates ... 3
Cross-government symposium ... 3
Results of the Stakeholder Summit ... 4
AEMA update ... 5
FIPEN update ... 5
fire etc. update ... 6
fire etc. assists with accreditation ... 7
Global concepts in fire safety reports ... 8
Giving back to the profession ... 9
SSEI update ... 10
FireSmart Community Series 2009 ... 10
Explaining the Alberta Emergency Plan ... 11
Successful ending to training pilot program ... 12
Training initiative project making progress ... 13
2008 Fire Prevention Week wrap up ... 14
AFCA update ... 15
Surrey, B.C. firefighters are making a difference in their community ... 16
Digest ... 17
ACICR update ... 18
Spill response program ... 19
New AEMA logo ... 20

On Scene Editorial Board

Lyle Birnie
Fire Chief (retired), Westlock Fire Department

Bob Gates
Fire Chief, Town of Beaumont

Trent West
Alberta Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training

Ernie Polsom
Assistant Fire Commissioner

Spence Sample
Senior Manager, Special Projects

Colin Blair
Director, Risk, Plans and Consequence Management

Colin Lloyd
Executive Director, Planning & Operations

Mahendra Wijayasinghe
Director, Research & Analysis

Fred Tyrrell
Manager, Stakeholder Relations

Tim Chander
Public Affairs Officer

Jayne Jeneroux
Managing Editor/Writer

SEE BACK COVER FOR CONTACT INFORMATION

ISSN 0848-6794

From the Managing Director of AEMA

One plus one adding up to more than two?

A PRIORITY OF THE ALBERTA government is to ensure that our communities are safe and secure for citizens of the province. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency, in concert with all partners in the fire and emergency management system, is engaged in ongoing efforts to achieve this goal through the use of enhanced communication, cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders.

Dave Hodgins

Recently, Mr. Colin Lloyd was appointed to the position of Executive Director of Planning and Operations and Mr. Trent West was appointed Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training. The two executive directors will be assisting the managing director of the agency in leading the integration of development efforts within the provincial emergency management system.

Through the use of cross-functional project teams (consisting of system representatives with expert, resource-linking, process-helping and catalyst capabilities), whose work is characterized by attention to respect, accountability, integrity and excellence... a long list... of very different... intensely needed initiatives are moving from the (less visible) underground "foundation" stage to the (more visible) above ground "main floor/second level" and finally to the (most visible) "roof-top" stage of completion. These efforts are undertaken with sensitivity to the following story about an advertising sign seen in the window of a local copy shop. It read something like this:

"We can produce the highest quality print copies ...in the shortest time... at the lowest price! Pick two (of the above)."

In addition to being fully engaged in doing our "day jobs" that include providing service to all government ministries, the agency, along with all the system partners, is busily engaged in moving the following new construction and renovation projects through to the "roof-top" stage: Training Grant Programs, Fire Services Advisory Committee recommendations, Public Educational Awareness, Fire Investigation and Code Enforcement, Emergency Management Decision Support Initiative, Emergency Public Warning System, Incident Command System, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, Alberta Risk Protocol, Disaster Recovery Programs, Municipal Emergency Management Program and the Alberta Emergency Notification System. The two flagship projects that will support all of the other programs are the:

- Fire and Emergency Services Training Initiative (which includes a review of accreditation and certification, training delivery, and finding a way to "grow" the system leaders for tomorrow).
- Agency Response Readiness Centre.

In reviewing the many and varied accomplishments of the project(s) "construction crew", it is clear that some effective teams are now "on scene". The development goals are being met despite common obstacles faced by all complex system organizations and the persons involved are enjoying the process of working together. It could be said that the work of these teams is a clear case of "One plus one adding up to more than two".

Thank you to everyone.

E. David Hodgins CEM, S.B.St.J.
Managing Director,
Alberta Emergency Management Agency

New appointments and more

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency has concluded the recruitment process for two executive director positions and, as noted on page 2, is please to announce the successful applicants.

- **Colin Lloyd** accepted the position of Executive Director of Planning and Operations effective December 22, 2008. Born and raised in the United Kingdom, his 22 years experience in emergency management includes varied and interesting years as a senior detective at New Scotland Yard, London, UK. He held posts ranging from Senior Homicide Investigator and Counter-Terrorism Operative to leading the Extradition and International Fugitive Unit in partnership with Interpol. He retired as Scotland Yard's lead on Witness Protection in April 2004. He has traveled the world extensively assisting countries as diverse as Jamaica, Slovakia, South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago to build credible systems for safety and security, and worked extensively with the FBI in Los Angeles, Washington and Miami. He holds a high commendation for professionalism and organizational ability in the immediate aftermath of the 1999 Paddington rail disaster in London, England when 32 passengers lost their lives in a train collision.
- **Trent West** accepted the position of Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training. His 19 years of emergency services experience includes Fire Service Advisor/Safety Officer, fire chief, firefighter, instructor and Safety Codes Officer plus 12 years of emergency and non-emergency operations and training in the oil and gas industry. Trent was also on the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Board of Directors for six years, a member of the Fire Investigators Association of Alberta and a member of the Canadian Fire Chiefs Association. He contributed to the development of the curriculum and presented instructional materials for NAIT's Emergency Management Diploma Program, and has organized major events involving up to 500 participants and 100 volunteers.

In announcing the successful applicants, Dave Hodgins, Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency also thanked everyone in the organization for their support in building the agency over the past 18 months. He also stated, "I need to acknowledge specific individuals at the executive level who have been acting in positions for a long time, unsure of the final outcome but unwavering in commitment. They are Colin Blair, Acting Executive Director, Administration, Finance and Training; Colin Lloyd, Acting Executive Director, Planning and Operations; and Ernie Polsom, Acting Fire Commissioner. These individuals have demonstrated courage and, thanks to their unselfish contributions, we are moving forward.

Other agency staff changes include:

- **Lisa Sherman** was selected for a position with Finance and Enterprise at the Regulatory Review Secretariat on a secondment basis until January 2010. She started in the position in January 2009.
- **James Berge** was selected for a 12 month secondment position as a Special Projects Manager with Alberta Infrastructure. He started this position on December 15, 2008.
- **Humyra Sabir** was selected for a 12 month career development secondment with Corporate Strategic Services within Municipal Affairs.
- **Kylie Degeling** became a permanent employee of the agency on December 2, 2008. Kylie has been one of the trainers in the agency since the spring and has received numerous accolades from the communities in which she has delivered the training. She is currently working towards a Masters degree in adult learning.
- **Lynda Bostrom** joined the Agency on January 19 as the new executive support in the Managing Director's Office. She transferred from the Corporate Strategic Services ADM's office from Municipal Affairs.
- **Colin Blair** started a new role with the agency on January 19, as the Director of Risk, Plans and Consequence Management with the agency. His knowledge, insight and experience will be invaluable to this position.

Cross-government symposium

Practicing the ability to work together

BY ADAM ARMITAGE, Stakeholder Relations, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Albertans expect their government to be joined-up and cooperating in emergency and fire response. Our population growth and economic expansion has meant increases in dangerous goods shipped through increasingly populated areas, increased populations in forest areas and development pressures in flood prone areas.

Under the Alberta Emergency Plan, "all partners work within a common framework to assure appropriate levels of emergency preparedness, response, recovery and business continuity." As our hazards increase, so does our duty to be prepared.

As the coordinating agency for the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) gathered staff from across provincial government departments for a day of cross-training and exercising in February 2009. The goal of the day was to bring the field staff and others together to solidify professional relationships and emphasize the foundation of cooperation that Albertans expect to see at emergencies across the province. The day's activities culminated in a table-top exercise.

These field staff represent the front line of response for the Government of Alberta and respond 24/7 to every emergency where their department can direct, coordinate or assist the responders on-site.

Summit deemed a success!

FOR TWO DAYS IN OCTOBER, over 300 fire chiefs, directors of emergency management, search and rescue specialists, disaster social service coordinators, municipal officials, industry partners, ambulance personnel, military representatives, police officers, elected officials and government staff gathered to talk about emergency management in Alberta.

By most accounts, the two day event was seen to be a great success. Keynote addresses were presented by British Columbia fire and police senior officials involved in marijuana grow operations, and by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Organization. Attendees then took in four workshops from an offering of 20 that fell into five streams.

A classic exterior with a high-tech interior.

One of the discussion groups at the Summit.

Overwhelmingly, feedback called for a repeat of the formula used to stage the event.

Attendance figure breakdown reveals that 23 per cent of the participants were from fire, 14 per cent from emergency management, 2 per cent worked in both areas and 5 per cent came from the social services. Police and ambulance personnel made up another 5 per cent, matching the attendance of elected officials. Search and Rescue members were present and the President of Search and Rescue Alberta presented a workshop as part of one stream. Government staff from both senior levels including agency personnel and speakers accounted for about 31 per cent. The balance came from provincial organizations or general municipal services.

Evaluation feedback ranged from comments concerning the great mixing of the services to concern that participants did not have enough time to discuss issues of concern with senior agency and government leaders. Overwhelmingly, feedback called for a repeat of the formula used to stage the event. If possible, the event should be expanded to allow for even more representation from even greater cross-sections of the emergency management system.

The new fleet of vehicles for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency was officially put on display for the first time, with these and other emergency vehicles being on display.

Adam Armitage-Conway, from the Stakeholder Relations Unit of the agency, and his team earned many accolades for their efforts in hosting a well run and well received event.

Accepting the challenge to work together

BY FRED TYRRELL, Manager, Stakeholder Relations

"The Agency shall be the coordinating agency for, and provide strategic direction and leadership to, the Government and its emergency management partners. The Agency shall develop, implement, manage and maintain the Alberta emergency management system as described in the Alberta Emergency Plan."

Thus the first two clauses of Section 2(1) of the Government Emergency Management Regulation read, and thus the mandate of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is defined.

The challenge is to look at these forty-two words and work to ensure that everyone who sees themselves as stakeholders interprets them the same way. "Coordinating"? "Strategic direction and leadership"? "Partners"? Many of the words carry different meanings to different stakeholders. Indeed, it is a challenge!

Those of us with law enforcement background or an understanding of legislation will easily agree to one point. Both sentences are written in imperative language; that is, there is no option allowed. The word "shall" does not mean "may" nor even "can"; it means "must"! So when someone wonders about the business of the agency, this regulation provides the answer. The managing director and every staff member working under him have a very clear objective, and that is to achieve success in these clearly defined areas.

So the opportunity lays before us to then consider HOW to achieve success in carrying out these defined areas. There is no power to encourage a "command and control" structure; there are not enough staff members to "take over" the vital and critical services provided by any one of the partners let alone those of the whole system. Indeed, a study of the organization chart shows a very lean machine – and that can be very intimidating to those who understand the scope of responsibilities that lay underneath these two sentences. It is critical, then, that the old customer service mantra of the Alberta Best customer service training program developed by this same government always is remembered: If you're not serving the customer directly, then you had better be serving someone who is!

Those of us in the agency should always remember that we serve those who serve the customer directly. We are but a part of the government and every part of the government is required to be a part of the emergency management system in this province. But even more than that, every partner and every citizen is too! Working together is the only way that the first two clauses of the Government Emergency Management Regulation will be accomplished. What can you do to be a part of that?

FIPEN update

Effective consolidation moves FIPEN forward

In a follow up to the article in the November 2008 issue of Alberta *FIREnews*, we are pleased to advise that action has been taken on the 12 recommendations made by the Steering Committee of the Fire and Injury Prevention Educators' Network (FIPEN) to the Executive of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) at a meeting held in Edmonton on September 30, 2008.

The Steering Committee was unanimous in supporting a meeting of the two co-chairs of FIPEN – Tim Vandenbrink, Assistant Fire Marshal in Fire Prevention, Edmonton Fire Rescue and Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Director, Research and Analysis at AEMA – and Colin Blair, Executive Director, Administration, Finance and Training at AEMA, to consolidate the 12 recommendations to a manageable four. This was accomplished and the four new recommendations, which maintain the intent of the original recommendations, are provided below:

- **Recommendation #1:** The Alberta Emergency Management Agency champions fire and injury prevention programs and influences Government of Alberta priorities using an evidence-based approach to prevention programs.
- **Recommendation #2:** The Alberta Emergency Management Agency adopts a regional approach that supports uniform delivery of fire and injury prevention programs in Alberta.
- **Recommendation #3:** The Alberta Emergency Management Agency develops both formal and informal training programs for fire and injury prevention educators.
- **Recommendation #4:** The Alberta Emergency Management Agency will evaluate public education programs to recognize and promote effective programs and best practices.

The above four consolidated recommendations form, in reality, part of one recommendation: The AEMA develops and implements a Provincial Fire and Injury Prevention Strategy.

The consolidated recommendations are presently with the AEMA executive for review, and an action plan will be developed jointly with the FIPEN Steering Committee in the New Year.

Degree program fits with emergency personnel wanting to advance

THERE IS AN OLD ADAGE among firefighters, police and rescue workers that goes, "He who stays the longest gets the keys to the hall." But as expectations and responsibilities of managers increase, so does the need for high-calibre post-secondary education programs that offer management skills development and organizational leadership training. In a time when the longest-serving officer may not necessarily want the job as top dog, Lakeland College is helping other members advance their careers with the Bachelor of Applied Business: Emergency Services (BAppBus:ES) degree program.

The BAppBus:ES degree, delivered completely online, is specifically geared for personnel in the emergency services field, including law enforcement, emergency medical, fire and rescue, emergency management, military and corrections. Students complete 19 core modules, electives and two four-month supervised and evaluated practicum projects. Before being admitted to the program, students must also have previous education (either a two-year diploma or 1,200 training hours) in emergency services, as well as five years full-time employment in the field.

Barton Ottoson has been a course developer, instructor and practicum coordinator in the program since 2004. He says many emergency services organizations are beginning to state in their management hiring and promotion protocols that to be considered, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree comparable to Lakeland College's BAppBus:ES program.

"The program is quickly becoming the standard for managers and leaders in the emergency services field," says Ottoson. "One of our graduates, for example, was recently promoted to the rank of deputy chief in a large urban fire department. He firmly believes the experience and knowledge gained from the BAppBus:ES program gave him an edge over other applicants."

That graduate is Brad Lorne, deputy chief of community standards with the Calgary fire department.

"The competition for deputy chief was long and difficult with 75 international applicants vying for the position," says Lorne. "I very much believe that the BAppBus:ES program gave me a distinct advantage."

Thanks to technology, students can be connected at any point around the world. Students enrolled in Lakeland's BAppBus:ES program, for example, have logged on from across Canada, the United States and Australia.

Those who have been part of the BAppBus:ES program, and with distance education in general, know the advantages to this type of program delivery. Thanks to technology, students can be connected at any point around the world. Students enrolled in Lakeland's BAppBus:ES program, for example, have logged on from across Canada, the United States and Australia. And because the program is delivered online, they are able to earn their degree while continuing on with their professional and personal lives.

For instructors, teaching in an online environment is equally rewarding and beneficial, but by no means is it less challenging and demanding, adds Mark Butler, associate dean of international and distance delivery at the college.

"For students to demonstrate mastery of required competencies, instructors must be able to deliver the course concepts in ways very different than those used in face-to-face delivery modes," says Butler. "Interactive technology – such as Elluminate Live!® and WebCT® – allows instructors to facilitate the exchange of ideas and materials, facilitate class discussions and monitor and evaluate student progress and participation."

Ottoson does have a physical office space at the college's Vermilion, Alberta, campus but he can be engaged with students from almost anywhere. "I travel a lot. The most unique place I've used as a workspace was my vehicle while my wife and I were driving behind a wi-fi equipped shuttle bus in Seattle," says Ottoson. "I can teach from practically anywhere as long as I have an Internet connection."

And for Ottoson, his work schedule as a distance education instructor and practicum coordinator suits his own personal lifestyle as well. "Even though I teach all year round, I have a lot of flexibility – including late night hours – in my schedule," says Ottoson. "One day, I could be working with students during the regular course of the day, and the next, I can be interacting with my students at 3 a.m. This works especially well for this program in particular because many students work shifts and are in other time zones and continents."

Both Ottoson and Butler are pleased to work on behalf of the college to offer high-quality and credible post-secondary educational programs that fulfill training needs specifically identified by industrial sectors. Their experience gained from developing and delivering the BAppBus:ES program in particular is also available to assist other college departments looking to deliver programs online. This year, the experience of Butler's department helped the college launch its new renewable energy and conservation certificate online program in Environmental Sciences.

"We've come a long way since the days of using 5 ¼" floppy disks and Internet transmission speeds of 300 baud rate," says Ottoson. "With advances in technology and the necessity to take programs to learners, there are so many opportunities for distance education programs at Lakeland."

Emergency training centre

fire etc., Lakeland College's emergency training centre, provides a wide spectrum of response, risk management planning and related training. Training is available to pre-professional students, municipal fire services and corporations. Training is offered on campus, at the client workplace, and through distance learning. For more information about **fire etc.**, visit our website at lakelandcollege.ca or e-mail info@fire-etc.ca.

AEMA coordinating new provincial strategy of collaboration and working together

fire etc. assists with accreditation transfer process

WHILE ANOTHER YEAR has ended and a new one has begun, it has been a blur to staff at **fire etc.**, Lakeland College's emergency training centre, as they worked with the Alberta government to transfer administrative responsibility for fire service accreditation and standards to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). Work also include helping the AEMA in developing accreditation and certification processes for search and rescue, emergency preparedness, disaster social services and amateur radio operation.

The AEMA is coordinating a new provincial strategy to ensure all organizations and partners involved in Alberta's system for managing emergencies are able to collaborate and work together so that during a crisis, Albertans receive the most effective public safety services possible.

Because of its expertise and 50 years experience in providing emergency services training and administering the accreditation service, **fire etc.** has been contracted by the Alberta government to help make a seamless transfer from the college to the government.

In the first phase of the project, Chris Senaratne, **fire etc.** Dean, has been contracted to the AEMA to transfer accreditation responsibilities. He is also assisting the AEMA to develop processes to allow an accreditation process to be applied to previously mentioned other disciplines.

Other staff from **fire etc.** are leading or working with various working groups on behalf of the government to review Alberta's emergency services training delivery system. They will develop programs to improve the safety of responders and the public from the growing prevalence of clandestine drug labs and marijuana grow operations. They will also evaluate mobile training products that could be made available and used in a range of weather and geographical conditions.

Another project involving Lakeland College and **fire etc.** staff being conducted under the direction of Alice Wainwright-Stewart, the college's vice-president of academics, innovation and research, is developing a proposal to establish a provincial centre of leadership in public safety. In cooperation with AEMA, the college intends to establish a cross-sectoral study centre to provide advanced leadership training and education for people in emergency services.

For more information, contact Chris Senaratne at 780-581-2029 or email to chris.senaratne@lakelandcollege.ca

Interesting new approach to residential fire safety

VETERAN FIRE PROTECTION researcher Phil Schaenman of TriData Division, System Planning Corporation has recently completed two reports on global concepts in residential fire safety. These reports highlight some very interesting approaches being taking by fire services in England, Scotland, Sweden and Norway. Provided below is an overview of the documents, which are posted at www.sysplan.com/tridata/publications/international.

As Phil Schaenman attests in his summary of best practices in these four countries, one particular approach stands out:

"To reduce fire casualties in the home, the British fire service is visiting large numbers of high-risk households to do fire safety inspections and risk reductions, especially to ensure they have a working smoke detector. This approach has required a major change in the culture and mission of the British fire service, which is thought by the British to be a major factor in the 40 per cent drop in fire deaths in the United Kingdom over the last 15 years."

. . . it is sometimes difficult to transfer good practices from one culture to another, that should not be the end-all excuse for not trying.

In his research, Schaenman discovered that the best practices that have arisen out of the new prevention strategy in the United Kingdom fall into eight major categories:

- identification and analysis of high risk households;
- increased staffing and training of prevention programs;
- making home safety visits;
- coordinating national and local fire safety campaigns;
- conducting extensive school and youth programs;
- directing programs to the high-risk elderly population;
- developing safer consumer products; and
- increasing the use of fire stations for community fire safety programs.

Similarly for Sweden and Norway, their best practices fell into the following categories, some of which are the same as those identified above:

- shifted responsibility for building fire safety;
- increased fire department staffing for prevention;
- expanded home safety visits;
- increased seasonal and year-round national and local safety campaigns;
- employee safety education;
- broad school safety programs;
- safety programs for the elderly;
- required use of home fire extinguishers; and
- improved consumer product safety.

The information contained in the reports may be of great interest to the fire and emergency management community in Alberta and beyond. As Schaenman states in the report "it is sometimes difficult to transfer good practices from one culture to another, that should not be the end-all excuse for not trying." Taking the time to visit the website and reading the reports may provide some new and interesting approaches that can be considered in Alberta.

Rescue truck donated to Lakeland College to help future firefighters

ON NOVEMBER 20, 2008, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Fire Chief Brian Makey handed over the keys for a Rescue 4 Truck used to respond to emergencies to **fire etc.**, Lakeland College's emergency training centre.

"We are more than pleased to give back to the profession when we can," said Chief Makey. "While Rescue 4 has had a great run here in Wood Buffalo, it will be invaluable to helping future generations of firefighters at Lakeland College."

The rescue truck will be used primarily by municipal firefighters taking training at **fire etc.**, as well as students in the 12-week firefighter training program and one-year emergency services technology diploma program.

*From left to right: Deputy Chief Tom Klein, Chief Brian Makey, **fire etc.** Dean Chris Senaratne and Kirk McInroy, **fire etc.** Manager, Technical Services.*

The Emergency Vehicle Life Cycle Replacement Policy recommends that Urban Rescues and pumpers be replaced every 20 years, or sooner, based upon a condition survey...

*A welcome and valued addition to the **fire etc.** training fleet.*

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

"My thanks to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo for this significant donation to **fire etc.**, Lakeland College's emergency training centre. I appreciate Wood Buffalo's support and admire the municipality's commitment to education," said Glenn Charlesworth, president of Lakeland College.

Rescue 4 first arrived in Wood Buffalo in 2000 and has over 190,000 kilometres of service. Throughout its eight year tenure with Regional Emergency Services, it has been used in Fort McMurray and also north and south on Highway 63. The Emergency Vehicle Life Cycle Replacement Policy recommends that Urban Rescues and pumpers be replaced every 20 years, or sooner, based upon a condition survey that evaluates the vehicle's overall serviceability as an emergency response unit. While Rescue 4 is no longer safe for high speed responses on Highway 63, it is able to provide low speed responses on the fire training field at Lakeland College.

Moving forward on the Safety, Security and Environment Institute (SSEI)

The Safety, Security and Environment Institute (SSEI) was originally recommended in the Environmental Protection Commission's report titled, *A Review of Alberta's Environmental and Emergency Response Capacity* - http://environment.alberta.ca/1823.html - that was released in response to the Wabamun spill in 2005. This document examines Alberta's emergency response system and identifies ways that Alberta can better manage, prepare for and respond to future environmental crises.

In the business case developed for the SSEI by its Advisory Committee, four basic functions were identified:

- research focused on identified knowledge gaps
- post incident analysis and trends
- knowledge transfer
- education and training.

The establishment of the SSEI, which falls within the mandate of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), received a boost in October 2008 with the hiring of Taylor Consulting, headed by Dr. Lorne Taylor. Dr. Taylor, working with communications consultant Val Mellesmoen, is currently assisting the AEMA in developing the SSEI.

A former provincial government minister, Dr. Lorne Taylor was a pioneer in promoting the concept of the Government of Alberta funding research that will serve Alberta and make it a world leader. Dr. Taylor's impressive educational background and research as professor in a number of universities, both in Canada and abroad, and his vast experience were welcomed by the SSEI Advisory Committee members at a meeting held on October 16, 2008. Commenting on the appointment, Dr. Eric Newell, former University of Alberta Chancellor and Chair of the Environmental Protection Commission, said that Dr. Taylor brings instant credibility to the SSEI. Dr. Taylor served in the Government of Alberta as the Minister Responsible for Science, Technology and Research and also as the Minister of Environment. Subsequent to his stepping down from the political arena, Dr. Taylor has consulted on a number of projects and is currently serving as the Chair of the Alberta Water Research Institute.

An outline of the proposed work by Taylor Consulting and currently underway includes the following four phases:

- scoping and discovery (October 2008)
- consultation (November to December 2008)
- initial recommendations and review (December 2008 to February 2009)
- implementation (February to March 2009).

Further updates on the progress of the SSEI will be provided in future issues of *On Scene*.

FireSmart Community Series 2009

Joining forces against wildfires

ALBERTA'S MUNICIPALITIES are growing like never before. For communities inside Alberta's forests this growth is compounding the threat of wildfire. Last year, more than 1,600 wildfires burned in Alberta's forest protection area, some of which threatened homes and property. With predictions of more severe fire seasons, the time is right for Alberta's municipalities to get prepared.

The *FireSmart Community Series* is a collection of workshops and roundtable discussions aimed at assisting communities to address the wildfire threat and build *FireSmart* communities. Municipal administrators, councillors, planners and emergency services staff from across Alberta are invited to attend this interactive and engaging series on March 10, 11 and 12 in Banff, Alberta. By joining together various local resources with the Alberta government, communities can work together to build a defence system against the danger of wildfire.

The FireSmart Community Series is a great way for municipal planners and personnel to come together and learn how to prepare their communities for the possible threat of wildfire.

"The risk of wildfire will always be present in the lives of those who live in Alberta's forested communities," said Tracy Price, *FireSmart* support technologist. "The best line of defence for Albertans is to ensure they've implemented *FireSmart* principles to protect their homes and properties."

In 2009, the *FireSmart Community Series* will feature upwards of 15 roundtable discussions that will explore various wildfire and *FireSmart*-related topics. New *FireSmart* education tools, developing *FireSmart* bylaws, social marketing, mock disaster exercises and integrating *FireSmart*

principles into community planning are just a few of the topics that will be offered in 2009.

"The *FireSmart Community Series* is a great way for municipal planners and personnel to come together and learn how to prepare their communities for the possible threat of wildfire," said Herman Stegehuis, provincial *FireSmart* manager. "The goal of the series is to foster meaningful partnerships and connections at all levels."

New for 2009, attendees will have the option of sitting in on a workshop tailored to municipalities in building successful *FireSmart Community Grant* applications. The program provides municipalities with funding up to $50,000 per year to reduce the risk of wildfire in their community. Projects like vegetation management, legislation development and interagency cooperation will be included in the workshop.

"Since 2005, more than $1 million has been distributed to 34 communities through the *FireSmart Community Grant Program*," said Stegehuis. "Funding is available to help make *FireSmart* principles a reality in Alberta's municipalities."

Included in the registration cost of the 2009 *FireSmart Community Series* is access on one of two featured bus tours:

- the *FireSmart* bus tour will take participants to several sites in and around the Banff area, where various approaches are being used to create *FireSmart* landscapes and communities,
- the mountain pine beetle bus tour will take attendees to the front lines of the battle against this forest pest. Participants will witness the impact this insect has caused, as well as the strategies that Alberta and its partners are using to protect our forests.

You can reserve your spot at the 2009 *FireSmart Community Series* for only $225 per person. The fee covers admission to the range of roundtable discussions, the *FireSmart Community Grant Application Workshop* and one of the featured bus tours.

The series takes place at the beautiful Banff Centre, nestled in the Rocky Mountains and only a short walk from the town's business core. You can register online today by visiting www.regonline.com/firesmart.

By working together and integrating *FireSmart* principles into municipal planning, you can ensure your community will be better prepared to face the potential threat of wildfire.

Explaining the Alberta Emergency Plan

Ensuring Alberta is a province prepared

If you attended the Stakeholder Summit in October, you probably heard the introduction to the new Alberta Emergency Plan. The plan came into effect when it was signed by the Honourable Ray Danyluk in December 2008. The plan, which was distributed to provincial government ministers, municipal directors of emergency management and fire chiefs, can be found on the agency website (http://aema.alberta.ca/ps_alberta_emergency_plan.cfm).

The *Emergency Management Act* and the Government Emergency Management Regulation establish the Alberta Emergency Management Agency as the coordinating body for government's emergency plans, and for ensuring that all partners work within a common framework.

The plan, which is directed by the new Government Emergency Management Regulation, serves as the provincial strategy to direct an integrated cross-government approach to emergency management and supports the Government of Alberta Goal 7: **Alberta will be a safe place to live, work and raise families.**

The plan describes the emergency management activities in relation to all participants within the emergency management system and includes:

- a description of the Alberta emergency management system,
- reference to the government business continuity plan and hazard-specific plans developed and maintained by government,
- direction on the procedures for the co-ordination of emergencies and
- the roles and responsibilities of departments and emergency management partners:
  - in the emergency management system and
  - in the preparation, implementation and maintenance of plans required by departments and local authorities.

The plan is designed to ensure the protection of people, property, communities, environment and economies from the effects of emergencies. It is a living document that will be amended, as necessary, through a planning process managed by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency in consultation with emergency management system partners.

The agency is responsible for the management and maintenance of the plan. The agency will update the plan as required by changes in policy, legislation or to incorporate lessons learned from exercises, evaluations and corrective action as a result of actual emergencies. All partners will be involved in the consultation process and, on completion, be provided with the details of any updates. The changes will be reflected in the Record of Amendments.

At a minimum and as coordinated by the agency, the plan will undergo a review every two years. Following the completion of the review process, the plan will be redistributed to all partners by the agency.

Through provincial coordination of the approach to emergencies and disasters, familiarity of all system partners with their roles and responsibilities and thorough and ongoing testing of capacity and capability, we can be confident that Alberta is a Province Prepared.

Successful ending to training pilot program

It's a wrap for the NFPA 1001 S300 pilot program

The NFPA 1001 S300 pilot program conducted in association with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and EducExpert (an online course delivery company from Quebec) recently concluded. The program, deemed very successful, involved student groups from Coaldale, the Municipal District of Rocky View, High Level and Peace River.

A total of 45 students from these four locations completed the course online and sat for the written examination after successfully completing practical skills evaluations. The student success rate for the program was 90 per cent. Overall, feedback for the program was very positive for this type of learning medium. A report based on the findings will be submitted to the AEMA for its consideration in taking this type of training forward.

Festive participants from the High Level fire service include Alex Corley-Smith, Laurie Hauk, Martin Medynski, Warren O'Reilly, Matthew Utri, Colin Wright and Rodney Schmidt.

Online students from the Municipal District of Rocky View – Cory Fahlman, Roy Fulton, Keith Garret, Adam Lacasse, Chad Peacock, Scott Walker and Doug Pieper.

The program, deemed very successful, involved student groups from Coaldale, the Municipal District of Rocky View, High Level and Peace River.

Participants from southern Alberta at the Coaldale debriefing – Travis Bakko, Conrad Broersma, Mark Dyck, DJ Kipnik, Rien Noordegraaf, Jeff Slingerland, Jacen Abrey and Andy Van Rijn.

Training initiative project making progress

AS YOU'RE PROBABLY AWARE, the Fire and Emergency Services Training Initiative (FESTI) project is well underway. The project began as a result of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency's commitment to conduct a complete review of the fire service training structure in Alberta. That scope was soon revised to also include training in the areas of emergency management, search and rescue, disaster social services and amateur radio operations. Given that the Government of Alberta views the many different agencies and jurisdictions who manage all emergencies within the province, whether large or small, holistically as partners within the greater emergency management system, this was not surprising.

There are three primary outcomes expected from the project:

- adopt an accreditation process where possible and create a training standards and certification process for each of the five target disciplines.
- provide a comprehensive evaluation of each identified suggestion made by stakeholders to remove or reduce barriers to training access.
- report on the most effective way Alberta can prepare tomorrow's emergency management system leaders and deal with the highly complex training needs presented. For example, by dangerous goods including those involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials.

The first step in the project involved discussions with the many stakeholders and partners within the emergency management system. A number of forums were held around the province, concluding in December 2008 with a six workshop tour aimed at the search and rescue discipline. During these sessions, participants were asked what they felt was working well in training and what was not. They were also given an opportunity to make suggestions for improvements.

Valuable information was obtained during this process. Stakeholders made the project team aware of some very basic underlying principles that will now be used to guide the balance of the project. As our emergency management system is very dependant on the generosity of volunteers who donate their time to achieve public safety goals, respect for this time will be at the core of the FESTI project. We also learned that not all system response agencies are connected to municipalities in a direct fashion. This is especially true of search and rescue groups and amateur radio operators. As a result of these subtle differences in structure, one size may not fit.

We also learned that volunteer and career emergency responders have similar desires for complete and effective training. Both want to be a part of the public safety solutions and included in discussions that affect their service.

Based on our findings, we have created a number of working groups to explore the many suggestions raised during the meetings. We will look at reducing travel time and expense by researching the possibility of using regional practical training sites closer to the person needing the training or by using mobile practical training props to bring that training right to them in their community. We are looking at common standards that training can be based upon and at opening up the Alberta marketplace to more choice in curriculum in meeting those identified standards.

As well, we are looking at ways to effectively transition the entire emergency management system and all of its partner agencies and members to the Incident Command System©.

Stakeholder comments have also resulted in a number of "demonstration projects" to test some of your suggestions, including the following:

- We are working with the *Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership* to test the use of a single coordinator of emergency management for six municipalities to provide the support to the existing directors of emergency management.
- We are working with the M.D. of Rocky View and the Town of Whitecourt to test alternative fire service training curriculum that does meet the NFPA 10012 standard. As mentioned earlier in this edition, we have completed a very successful project with the towns of Coaldale, High Level, Peace River and the M.D. of Rocky View to test the use of on-line learning strategies.
- We are nearing completion of the first collaborative training curriculum development project between law enforcement, fire, EMS and many government ministries to create the first course material for training responders to meth labs and marijuana growing operations.
- We have also retained several consultants who are now providing research assistance so we can determine, among other things, the effectiveness of mobile training units, how we can build and/or fund regional training facilities if they are required, what hazards exist in Alberta and the priority of those hazards.

. . . we are looking at ways to effectively transition the entire emergency management system and all of its partner agencies and members to the Incident Command System©.

The FESTI working groups are now being chosen and will soon be hard at their tasks and we expect to complete the next phase of the project by mid summer of 2009. Stay tuned as there will be much more information coming.

Celebrating another Fire Prevention Week campaign

Sparky gives 2008 FPW contest winner Sarah Anne Whittal a big hug.

BASED ON THE VARIOUS events that took place across the province by the fire service and the media, the *2008 Fire Prevention Week* (FPW) was a great success in helping Alberta communities, large and small, participate in a variety of educational activities related to the theme of *"Its Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires."* This year's theme was particularly applicable for Albertans, given that fires that happen in Alberta homes account for about 70 per cent of all fire deaths in the province.

Thanks to ATCO Gas, ATCO Electric, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and the involvement of 328 fire departments across Alberta, students in grades K - 3 had the chance to enter a contest for a home computer system. The winning student was Sarah Anne Whittal, a Grade 3 student at Bon Accord Community School in Bon Accord. Sarah Anne's school and her homeroom teacher, Mrs. Markowski, also each received a $200 cash prize. Kevan Jess, Acting Assistant Fire Commissioner with the AEMA presented the award in cooperation with Patrick Mahone of the Bon Accord Fire Department. Also in attendance at the December 5, 2008 presentation at Bon Accord Community School were Keith Carter, Vice President, Parkland Division, ATCO Gas and Angela Martin, Communications ATCO Gas & ATCO Electric.

Announcing the 2008 FPW winner at Bon Accord Community School.

Sarah Anne and her parents display her winnings.

It's official – the winners of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association *Fire Prevention Week* contest have been announced.

Under 2,500	Macleod Gazette
2,501 - 5,000	Lacombe Globe
5,001 and over	Drumheller Valley Times

And the following papers received honourable mentions and certificates:

Under 2,500	Valleyview Valley Views and the Fox Creek Times
2,501 - 5,000	Didsbury Review and the Olds Albertan
5,001 and over	Brooks & County Chronicle and the Lloydminster Meridian Booster

Participation in the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association contest was also a success. The contest is run each year as part of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency's annual *Fire Prevention Week* campaign to encourage weekly newspapers across Alberta to promote *Fire Prevention Week* to their readers during the designated week.

This year, more than half of the member newspapers provided fire prevention and safety messages in their publications during *Fire Prevention Week*. Submitted entries were placed in three categories – Under 2,500, 2,500 - 5,000 and 5,001 and over – and reviewed by a panel of judges, which included Tom Karpa, Captain, Public Education, Edmonton Fire Rescue Services; Kylie Degeling, External Training, AEMA; Tim Chander, Public Affairs Officer with AEMA; and Jayne Jeneroux, Managing Editor/Writer, On Scene (formerly *Alberta FIREnews*). The winners and honourable mentions, which are indicated above, were announced at the AWNA conference on January 31, 2009.

Following the issues that affect us

BY BILL PURDY, Executive Director, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association

THE THEME OF THIS ISSUE – "integration/connections/joining together" - is timely for the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association as during the month of November considerable time was spent reviewing Bill 43, *Emergency Health Act*.

First, a special thanks to the various fire chiefs who called my office, voicing their concerns about the fact that first responders were not mentioned in the legislation. While the bill is silent on many aspects of operation, first responders will be included in the regulations as fire departments and the many volunteer first responders are so important to the health care system.

Often, fire departments are the first on the scene and provide assistance in many ways. This role has to continue for the well being of our constituents.

Knowing that the role of the first responder is so valuable in many parts of rural Alberta, the AFCA executive committee has concerns with the Minister of Health being given considerable powers under regulations. As a result, I had a number of meetings and conference calls with the Acting Assistance Deputy Minister of Health, Darlene Bouwsema' and the sponsor of the bill, MLA Rob Anderson. We reached an agreement, supported by the Minister, that the Alberta Fire Chiefs would be included in any decisions that would affect first responders. This was confirmed in a letter received November 25, 2008 from the Acting Assistance Deputy Minister. This consultation will happen in the spring and summer of 2009.

Often, fire departments are the first on the scene and provide assistance in many ways. This role has to continue for the well being of our constituents.

Your association has also been following the decision of the government to decrease the number of dispatch centres in Alberta. The government wants to reduce the numbers from 32 to 9. Within the framework of the RFP, no dispatch services for fire departments that are now dispatching fire along with ambulances are proposed. We will continue to monitor this issue.

As I reported in the last issue of *Alberta FIREnews*, the working group on retention and recruitment is now meeting. The group consists of fire chiefs from all areas of Alberta, elected officials, First Nations and volunteers. Plans include monthly meetings and an interim report for the AFCA annual general meeting in May. Your input by writing would be appreciated.

The Annual General Meeting committee, chaired by Camrose Fire Chief Peter Krich, has completed the program, which includes a number of interesting speakers, including:

- **Bruce Kirkby** – adventurer, author and Canadian guide;
- **Ben Klaene** – Safety/Training Chief, Cincinnati Fire Department;
- **Ed Kirtley** – IFSTA Project Coordinator;
- **Martin Krezalek** – Emergency Response Office, Alberta Environment Support and Emergency Response Team; and
- **Chad Sartison** – Chair/CEO, *The Fire Within*.

We look forward to seeing most of you at the meeting, which takes place May 23 - 27, 2009 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

Surrey, B.C. firefighters are making a difference in their community

Breaking from traditional roles to help tackle community's meth problem

BY LEN GARIS, Fire Chief, Surrey Fire Department

THE GROWING METH EPIDEMIC in Canada's cities is usually the territory of police, health and social service agencies. In Surrey, B.C., however, members of the fire service have also thrown their support – and dollars – into the fight against this scourge in their community.

"We have to break from tradition and leverage our resources," Surrey Fire Chief Len Garis explained. "We're saying, 'There is a problem in the city, and it's our problem, too.'"

Meth is a common term for crystal methamphetamine, a highly addictive drug that affects the body's nervous system and initially makes users feel invincible and euphoric. Meth can be cheaply and easily manufactured using many products – referred to as precursors – found in hardware and drug stores, including acetone, hydrochloric acid, red phosphorous, ephedrine, lye, Drano, iodine, lighter and brake fluid, cold remedies and camper fuel.

Meth's inexpensive production results in a cheap street cost, making it increasingly the drug of choice among addicts. B.C. police say a single dose of meth can cost as little as $5 and an addict may support a habit for as little as $20 per day, according to *Clandestine Drug Laboratories in British Columbia* (Plecas et al., 2005), a report by the International Centre for Urban Research Studies at the University College of the Fraser Valley.

Even more alarming are recent studies that indicate meth may be prevalent in B.C. high schools. In a 2005 *Institute for Safe Schools for British Columbia* survey, at least eight per cent of the 13,176 high school students polled in three school districts used crystal meth during the 2004-05 school year – mostly on school property (Waterhouse and Dow, 2005). As well, close to half reported using meth on school grounds more than once per week.

Meth is a common term for crystal methamphetamine, a highly addictive drug that affects the body's nervous system and initially makes users feel invincible and euphoric. Meth can be cheaply and easily manufactured using many products – referred to as precursors...

The situation is similar in Surrey, where a 2005 school district survey indicated 1,260 (nine per cent) of the 14,000 high school students had used meth off of school grounds, while 980 students (seven per cent) had used meth while at school.

Also among the district survey results was the startling statistic that four per cent of Grade 8 students and three per cent of Grade 9 students said they use meth more than once a week.

In response to Surrey's growing meth problem, the Surrey Methamphetamine Regional Task Force (SMART) was formed in February 2006 following the model of a successful pilot project in neighbouring Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows.

SMART's 90-day awareness campaign spawned an ongoing Meth Watch program in the community that targets businesses that sell meth precursors. Chief Garis chaired SMART's precursor committee and Surrey firefighters helped promote the awareness campaign by distributing precursor information to Surrey businesses.

The fire service has also made a long-term commitment to help sustain Meth Watch in Surrey. During company inspections, firefighters look for meth precursors and encourage retailers to join Meth Watch, which provides display materials and education about suspicious sales of precursors.

Surrey firefighters have also opened their wallets to help fight their community's drug problem. In September, the Surrey Firefighters' Charitable Society – a project of the Surrey Firefighters' Union – announced a pledge of $1 million towards fighting mental health and addiction-related issues in Surrey.

What are the signs?

If you see large amounts of these products or their packaging in unusual places, a meth lab could be close by.

The funds will be split three ways:

- $100,000 for an endowment to establish a lectureship on research into mental health and addiction at Simon Fraser University's Surrey campus, allowing for an expert to share research findings at SFU and speak at community forums throughout the region;
- $500,000 for a mental health and addictions crisis unit at Surrey Memorial Hospital's new Emergency Centre; and
- $400,000 towards future city programs that provide long-term solutions to crime and the cycle of addiction.

"We feel firefighters are respected members of the community and we should take a leadership role in trying to deal with some of these social issues," said Larry Thomas, president of the firefighters' union and its charitable society.

As first responders and public safety advocates, firefighters have grown increasingly concerned about the negative consequences of drugs in the community, including crime, the general decay of the downtown core and the growing number of homeless addicts, Thomas said.

It's hoped the firefighters' funds will not only help bridge the gap in services for addicts that exists after the police do their jobs, but also encourage other organizations and businesses to step up and provide funding, he added. "The aim is to help create a safer community, and that's what we're all about."

A strong relationship exists between drugs, crime and threats to public safety. In a 2003 report on auto crime in Surrey called *Perception vs. Reality*, police estimated that most auto thieves are addicts and at least 70 per cent are chronic meth users. Stolen vehicles are often used to commit secondary crimes, including arson, the report said. As well, reckless driving comes with the territory and sometimes results in fatalities; between 1999 and 2001, 81 deaths resulted from stolen vehicles in Canada.

The production of drugs brings considerable safety hazards into residential neighbourhoods. The UCFV report *Clandestine Drug Laboratories in British Columbia*, which studied the 33 clandestine labs found by police from April 2, 2004 to March 31, 2005, said 58 per cent of the labs were in houses or apartments, most of them rented.

Fire and explosion are known risks at clandestine labs, the report said. A review of files revealed that leaky chemical containers were found at 33 per cent of the sites, while burn hazards were found at 64 per cent of the sites. As well, fire was involved in one-third of the labs that were operational at the time of police intervention.

In addition, the labs pose environmental risks from improper disposal of chemicals and equipment, and the presence of weapons threatens public safety. Firearms were found at 31 per cent of the labs, and other weapons, such as knives, were found 23 per cent of the time.

Working to eliminate drug labs is important, but it is only one part of the solution, Chief Garis said. Each day, firefighters see the other side of the equation – the results of drug addictions – as they respond to medical emergencies around the community. It's clear a more holistic approach to the problem is needed – one that involves all members of the community, including the fire service, he added. "We need to get upstream of the problem and be proactive to assist the community in dealing with it."

Digest

In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of the following fire personnel:

* * * * *

Jerry Petiot, an active member of the Daysland Fire Department for over 28 years, passed away on November 7, 2008.

* * * * *

Jeff Warawa, Smoky Lake County Fire Chief, died December 4, 2008 in a vehicle collision.

* * * * *

Gord Cairney, former Fire Investigator with the former Fire Commissioner's Office (Peace River Office), passed away on December 2, 2008 in southern Alberta.

* * * * *

Bookmark this site

Have you checked out the VFIS website lately? It includes a wealth of information for the fire service, from seasonal articles of interest to community residents to items of particular interest to fire service personnel. The site and its information can be easily accessed by visiting www.vfis.com/resources.htm.

VFIS
A Division of Gallagher Insurance Group

VFIS is the world's leading provider of insurance coverages and education and training programs for the emergency services community, with more than 15,000 clients in 49 states and Canada

New federal agreement between Canada and the U.S.

Recognizing the importance of strengthening cooperation in emergency management in both natural and man-made incidents, emergencies and disasters, the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States signed an agreement in October 2008. As stated in the document, the agreement will help strengthen cooperation between the two countries to more effectively prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate such events. One of the first key responsibilities resulting from the agreement is the establishment of a Canada/U.S. consultative group on emergency management cooperation.

Effective partnerships enhance awareness about ACICR's falls campaign

SINCE 1998, the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR) has taken many steps towards its vision: an injury-free Alberta in which to work, play and live. Collaboration has played an essential role in ACICR's many achievements. Recently, ACICR, the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health & Wellness with the support of the Alberta Seniors' Falls Prevention Awareness Advisory Committee developed and implemented a provincial campaign to generate mass awareness and action to address the very serious and costly issue of injuries caused by falls among seniors.

Alberta Centre for INJURY Control & Research

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Falls are the most common cause of injury for seniors. In fact, 1 in 3 seniors living in the community and 40 - 50 per cent of those living in institutions will experience a fall each year. Almost half of seniors who fall experience minor injuries, and 5 - 25 per cent experience serious injuries such as hip fractures which lead to death in 15 - 20 per cent of cases due to complications. In 2003, $88 million was spent on seniors' fall-related hospital admissions. By the year 2033, the senior population is expected to increase 61 per cent. If left unchecked, the annual, direct cost of fall-related hospital admissions for seniors is likely to reach $250 million, a 146 per cent increase. These costs do not include emergency department visits, payments to physicians, physiotherapists, homecare, medication or costs to the individual. While the dollar-value of the staggering costs of falls can be calculated, the impact these injuries have on individuals and their families is much more severe, especially in terms of Alberta's seniors' freedom and quality of life.

Seniors' Falls Prevention Month and the awareness campaign *Finding Balance* was officially launched by Premier Stelmach, along with Minister Jablonski (Seniors and Community Supports) and Minister Liepert (Health and Wellness) on November 3, 2008 at the Alberta Legislature Building. The month-long campaign urged well seniors living in communities to take action to prevent a fall from happening by keeping active, checking medications and making the home safe. Campaign supporters such as the Alberta Physiotherapy Association, the Alberta Pharmacists' Association and Alberta Seniors and Community Supports along with advisory committee members from across the province worked diligently to spread the promotional material within their own networks. Furthermore, with the support of Health Link Alberta, the campaign was able to link seniors with falls prevention programs offered within their own communities.

ACICR credits the power of collaboration and partnership for the successes of the *Finding Balance* campaign. The presence of the many partners and supporters has enhanced the quality of resources developed, has facilitated the far reach of the campaign to older Albertans throughout the province and has connected seniors to support within their own communities. It is certain that future *Finding Balance* campaigns will only improve as existing working relationships grow and new relationships are formed.

Partnering approach safeguards the environment

by Martin Krezalek, Emergency Response Officer, Community Spill Response Program Coordinator,

Shawn Ingram, ASERT Emergency Response Officer presenting spill response unit equipment and capabilities at the Southern Alberta Fire Fighter Conference (Lethbridge, AB).

The Alberta Environment Support and Emergency Response Team unveiling the program at the Alberta Legislature (Edmonton, AB).

The Alberta Environment Support and Emergency Response Team (ASERT) provides leadership in environmental emergency management, assuring the health of Albertans and their environment. ASERT is committed to proactive, effective and efficient emergency response guided by the emergency management principles of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Community Spill Response Program demonstrates a strong proactive commitment by Alberta Environment to address environmental emergencies through proactive strategies. Alberta fire departments operate as an agency of the local government where the local authority is responsible for initial direction and control of any emergency events. As such, fire departments are typically first on scene in response to emergency events, including spills where the health of Albertans and the environment may be threatened.

This new pilot program assists rural Alberta communities in safeguarding public and environmental health by interrelating traditional fire services with spill response during the initial response stage of a spill. The program provides equipment, training and ongoing support to Alberta's fire departments and their communities.

Every spill response unit is a fully outfitted 18' × 7' cargo trailer containing identical type and amount of equipment such as hard boom, sorbent materials, rope/rigging and support tools. Equipment can be modularized in the trailer, allowing fire departments to fully or partially deploy the equipment necessary in response to a small or large spill incident. Each spill response unit is capable of both land and water-based response tactics utilizing equipment contained in the unit.

In the event of an environmental emergency, spill response units can be quickly mobilized and deployed to the spill scene by the fire department. Equipment can be deployed to incidents ranging from small fuel leaks at motor vehicle incidents to large product releases into water. Furthermore, program term funding is provided to support equipment maintenance and replenishment.

Initial spill response actions taken by first responders once on scene can significantly minimize and/or prevent the environmental impacts and secondary consequences of a spill. The initial hours of response to any spill are critical and set the stage for all further response actions to manage, control and mitigate the spill. During this initial response stage, the responsible party (person responsible) is acting with immediate priority to mobilize and action resources in response to the spill. Depending on the nature, scale and circumstances of the incident, the responsible party establishes management and control of the incident and the fire department may release the scene at their discretion.

Spill response is a team effort and being prepared is essential. The program includes a training component which, aside from the equipment itself, is the foundation of effective spill management and control. The ability of first responders to work together, adapt and remain positive during an incident requires core structure and response concepts to achieve success. It is also recognized that initial spill response strategies and tactics will be dynamic and vary significantly. As such, the hands-on training is designed to achieve standardized training objectives, assuring safe and confident use of the spill response equipment at the initial response level.

Participation in the program does not change the regulatory requirements of any responsible party having care, control and/or custody of any substance to respond to a spill with immediate priority. The participating municipality is not automatically obligated to deploy the spill response unit in response to an environmental emergency. There is no requirement for the participating fire department to conduct any activities beyond their existing operational service agreement and mutual aid agreement(s). Although Alberta Environment retains the right to deploy the spill response unit at any time under extenuating circumstances, Alberta Environment does not function as a spill response contractor.

As of November 2008, fire departments in the municipalities of High Prairie, Hinton, Ponoka, Olds and Taber are active

Continued on page 20 ▸▸

▸▸ Continued from previous page

participants in the Community Spill Response Program pilot. This community-based initiative promotes strong relationship-building between the Government of Alberta, municipal fire services and their mutual aid partners.

This partnered approach to environmental emergency response fosters the continuously evolving relationship between government and Alberta communities assuring public confidence and safeguarding of the environment.

For further information on the program, please contact Martin Krezalek, ASERT – phone 780-203-1881 or e-mail at martin.krezalek@gov.ab.ca.

The program's contract spill response trainer Trever Miller, SWAT Consulting Inc. conducting dry land spill response unit equipment familiarization (Hinton, AB).

New AEMA logo

Refining our look

IN THIS AGE OF INFORMATION and media overload, a striking and uniquely identifiable visual identity is an important tool in reaching your audience. In the Alberta Emergency Management Agency's case, its audience is the people of Alberta, our partners in the fire and emergency management systems and government.

Our new crest incorporates elements of the Maltese cross – a link to the historic tradition of fire and emergency services – with the Government of Alberta coat-of-arms. The Alberta signature is also prominently displayed. It signifies that the Government of Alberta is present in our communities before and after an emergency occurs.

What do you think?

As you begin to see the crest in your community, feel free to contact agency field staff in your area and offer your comments.

We also welcome electronic feedback on the new crest or any other concerns. Please send your comments to aema@gov.ab.ca.

Alberta On Scene **is published by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency for the information of fire/emergency management professionals and others with a related interest in this field.**

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of AEMA or the Government of Alberta. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged. The contents of *On Scene* may be reproduced with the appropriate credit to the source. The editorial office of *On Scene* is located at:

Alberta Emergency Management Agency
Suite 2810, 10303 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N6

Phone: 780-422-9000
Fax: 780-644-1044
Email: aema@gov.ab.ca

ISSN 0848-6794

Jack Born, Design Quarry Print & Digital Solutions Ltd.
Graphic design and print production.

Alberta
Alberta Emergency Management Agency